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## **RESEARCHERS ASSESS WHETHER PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING IS EFFECTIVE AT REDUCING CRIME AND DISORDER**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla— In a series of papers published in *Criminology & Public Policy* (CPP), the effectiveness of problem-oriented policing (POP) in reducing crime in cities is assessed. POP is a strategy that requires police officers to be proactive in identifying problems in their communities that should be targeted to alleviate crime at its root. This strategy focuses on an array of community problems, including physical disorder as well as crime.

Professor David Weisburd and doctoral student Cody Telep of George Mason University, with Professors Joshua Hinkle of Georgia State University and John Eck of the University of Cincinnati, reviewed the available research literature assessing the effectiveness of POP and found that this policing style is associated with reductions in crime and disorder. Because only 10 studies were determined to provide sufficiently reliable evidence upon which Weisburd and associates could base their review, the authors urged academics to conduct research on the effectiveness of problem-oriented policing across different types of jurisdictions and police agencies. Ultimately, the authors concluded that— when effectively used— problem-oriented policing holds considerable promise for ameliorating crime and disorder problems.

Echoing Weisburd and colleagues, Anthony Braga of Harvard University called for more rigorous research designs and the development of a stronger evidence base for POP. More specifically, Braga argued that the best way for effective research to be done and the best way to make improvements to the strategy would result from better and stronger working relationships between scholars and police practitioners. Federal funding initiatives that provide support for academic–police practitioner partnerships, explained Braga, could raise the quality of POP projects and improve the knowledge base on effective practice.

Policy essayist Nick Tilley of the University College London was not as convinced by the findings reported by Weisburd and associates. Although he is a strong proponent of the POP strategy, he cautioned against being fully confident in the conclusions offered by Weisburd and colleagues. Tilley's concerns stem primarily from the specificity of local crime fluctuations and problem-solving techniques used in the 10 studies that were included in their evaluation. Tilley does, however, believe that the positive findings from the study show the potential of POP, and should encourage more research.

Senior Editor Michael Scott of the University of Wisconsin Law School concluded the series by observing that more needs to be done to improve the capacity of police to undertake POP strategies and of evaluators to properly assess it.

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